

ECER 2016 – Teachers beliefs about citizenship education: different dimensions and variation across teachers and schools

1. Title of proposal

Teachers beliefs about citizenship education: dimensions and determinants

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3. First and second choice network

- First network: Network 7. Social Justice and Intercultural education
- Second network: Network 31. Language and Education

4. Keywords (3 – 5)

Language and integration policies, perceptions and beliefs, teacher-pupil-interaction, civic education, quantitative research methodologies

5. General description on research questions, objectives and theoretical framework (up to 600 words)

Over the last three decades, most Western-European societies have become characterized by diverse and transitory migration processes, consisting of migrants frequently moving within the European

space, refugees and asylum seekers, migration in the context of family reunification, marriage migration and exchange students and high skilled workers. Traditional processes of acculturation of intergenerational assimilation no longer seem to occur automatically. This recent wave of migration puts much pressure on many European societies when it comes to concepts such as social cohesion, integration, citizenship, identity, and language (Van Avermaet, 2009a and 2009b).

In Western-Europe, present-day integration policies often make use of the notion 'active citizenship', aimed at encouraging – or coercing – migrants to participate socially, politically and economically in the host society. In the literature, multiple definitions of 'active citizenship' can be found, all including some common characteristics (Odé & Walraven, 2013) 1) social involvement and participation; 2) active participation in public debate, political and democratic institutions; 3) active citizenship has to be inclusive of all members of society; 5) active citizenship supposes certain cognitive and social skills; and 6) loyalty towards the society a person lives in.

Also the Flemish government frames integration policies and citizenship courses as a compelling question to migrants to take up active citizenship, defining it as follows (Inburgering, Flemish Department Home Affairs): 'to respect the basic principles of the democratic rule of law and to actively participate in society.'

Questions about the meaning of national identity, and how to maintain social cohesion and preserve national, cultural and linguistic heritage are of growing concern for policy makers and society as a whole (Van Avermaet 2009). The national language and knowledge of society are considered essential and definable elements of citizenship (and a successful integration process) (Shohamy, 2006).

But not only integration policies are aimed at promoting active citizenship and social cohesion. In the Flemish education system, each individual teacher – regardless the subject being taught - has to contribute to preparing students for active participation in society in later life (Curriculum Secondary Education). However, very little is known about what (Flemish) teachers' beliefs are with respect to citizenship education, and even less is known about the prevalence of various citizenship education beliefs across different teachers and schools.

Another characteristic of current Flemish education policies and practices is a prevailing monolingual paradigm – solely focusing on proficiency in the national language as the key factor for active citizenship. Educational failure (being failure of educational integration) of non-Dutch speaking students is primarily – and often exclusively – explained by insufficient skills in Standard Dutch. Again, little is known about the extent monolingual beliefs of teachers interact with their beliefs on citizenship education.

The main purpose of this study is to gain insight in the beliefs of teachers in secondary schools in Flanders regarding citizenship education. We distinguish four research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are the different dimension of citizenship education beliefs among teachers?

RQ2: Does the prevalence of different dimensions of citizenship education vary across teachers and schools?

RQ3: Does teacher or school characteristics have an influence on the prevalence of different dimension of citizenship education?

RQ4: Are teacher beliefs about monolingualism related to different dimension of citizenship education?

6. Methods/methodology (up to 400 words)

Research design

We surveyed 674 teachers across 48 Flemish (Belgian) secondary schools. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and multilevel analysis (MA) are conducted with SPSS 21. Missing values were handled using multiple imputation; six imputations were requested and pooled results are reported.

Teacher level variables

Citizenship. Teachers' beliefs regarding citizenship are measured using fifteen items.

Monolingualism. Teachers' beliefs in favor of monolingual ideology in education are measured using eight items. Similar items had already been used successfully in a previous research conducted in Flanders (Pulinx, Van Avermaet and Agirdag, 2015).

Track. We distinguish between four types of teachers according to the educational tracks in which they function. In Flanders we distinguish mainly three tracks: general, technical and professional track.

We also control for *teacher gender* and *teacher experience*.

School-level variables

Ethnic minority composition. School ethnic minority composition is measured by the percentage of ethnic minority students in school, as estimated by the teachers.

School sector. The school sector variable was split between 24 publicly run schools and 24 privately run schools. This reflects the educational situation in Flanders where around half of the schools are Catholic schools.

7. Expected outcomes/results (up to 300 words)

RQ1:

Our preliminary EFA shows that we can distinguish three dimensions of citizenship, as offered to students at school: 1) dimension of social engagement (e.g. to understand people with different opinions and belief; to know what to do to protect the environment); 2) dimension of authoritative citizenship (e.g. to obey the law; to work hard); and 3) participative citizenship (e.g. becoming a member of a political party; to participate in political discussions and debates).

RQ2:

All three dimensions vary significantly across schools and teachers, while the variation across schools is much smaller than the variation across teachers.

RQ3:

Both teacher characteristics (experience, gender, curriculum track) and school characteristics (ethnic minority composition) were significantly related to teachers' beliefs about citizenship education. However, the size and the direction of the effects was different across dimensions.

RQ4:

Teachers who adhere more strongly to monolingualism in education gave more attention to the authoritative dimension of citizenship education and less attention to participatory dimension.

8. References (400 words)

- Curriculum Secondary Education: <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/curriculum/secundair-onderwijs/vakoverschrijdend/context5.htm>
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